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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 SSM-03 /099 W
----------082334 180017Z /61
P R 172240Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8032
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MASS, SOPN, UR, US, EG
SUBJECT: SOVIET MEDIA REACTION TO U.S. ARMS SALE TO EGYPT

1. SOVIET MEDIA HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY TOUGH ON ADMIN-
ISTRATION'S DECISION TO SELL FIGHTER AIRCRAFT TO ISRAEL,
SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT. EXAMPLES ARE TASS WASHINGTON
PIECE IN FEBRUARY 16 PRAVDA AND ARTICLE BY PRAVDA AFRO-
ASIAN DEPARTMENT CHIEF, PAVEL DEMCHENKO IN FEBRUARY 17
PRAVDA. WHILE ARTICLES EXPRESS PIOUS WORRY OVER DANGER
OF INCREASED ARMS SALES TO M.E., REAL SOVIET CONCERN
SEEMS TO BE POLITICAL IMPACT OF F-5 E SALES TO EGYPT.
INDEED SOVIET MEDIA HAD PREVIOUSLY HARPED ON SADAT'S
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EMPTY-HANDED DEPARTURE FROM WASHINGTON AS PROOF OF THE
TOTAL FAILURE OF HIS POLICIES AND OF U.S. UNWILLINGNESS
TO ALTER ITS ALLEGEDLY ONE-SIDED SUPPORT OF ISRAEL.

2. ADMINISTRATION'S ACTION IS CRITICIZED ON SEVERAL
COUNTS, E.G.:

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--AS CONSTRIBUTION TO EXPLOSIVE SITUATION WHICH COULD LEAD TO NEW ARMED CONFLICT;

--AS EXAMPLE OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR SEPARATE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TALKS, AND THUS A HINDRANCE TO POLITICAL PROCESS LEADING TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT;

--AS A DISAVOWAL OF PRESIDENT'S REPEATED PROMISES TO CURTAIL ARMS SALES ABROAD.

ATTEMPT IS ALSO MADE, ESPECIALLY BY DEMCHENKO, TO DENIGRATE IDEA THAT U.S. MIGHT IN ANY WAY BE WEAKENING ITS SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. HE POINTS OUT, FOR EXAMPLE, SUPERIORITY OF F-15 AND 16 TO F-5'S AND CITES SECRETARY'S EXPLANATION OF THIS FACTOR, PLUS HIS REITERATION OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAELIS AS EVIDENCE THAT U.S.AND ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP REMAINS UNCHANGED.

3. COMMENT: SOVIETS HAD MADE MUCH OF ALLEGED FAILURE OF SADAT'S POLICIES IN GENERAL AND OF HIS U.S. TRIP IN PARTICULAR. LENGTHY ARTICLE IN FEBRUARY 15 IZVESTIYA BY POLITICAL COLUMNIST S. KONDRASHOV PROVIDED GOOD EXAMPLE OF SOVIET GLOATING OVER SADAT'S "BANKRUPTCY." U.S. SALE REQUEST HAS FORCES HASTY SWITCH IN PROPAGANDA LINE AND, DEPENDING ON SOVIET READING OF POSSIBILITY OF CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF SALE TO EGYPTIANS, MAY WELL
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CAUSE SOME SOVIET POLICY REACTION AS WELL. MATLOCK

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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